

sniffed the air, smelling something familiar, and she followed her nose and found Clete lying in the driveway. She approached him cautiously, one slow, soft footfall at a time. She sniffed him from ankle (at the top of the driveway, pointing toward the house) to head (pointing streetward). When she reached his face, she sniffed that, too, and licked the spittle that flowed like bubbly lava from his mouth. Clete reached across himself and patted the little dog's head. He wanted to tell her to go get Juanita, but he couldn't find the words.

PINHOLE BLUES

Dawn broke as Clete lay in his driveway between the Buick and his wife's little green Datsun B-210. Ginger, his wife's tiny rodent of a chihuahua, lay on his chest, her chin on her paws, sleeping. Clete hadn't slept all night. The stroke that felled him as he leaned against his fender looking up at the stars had scared him shitless....

The right half of his body was useless, cut off from the neural messages from his brain by an aneurysm that had sprung a leak and squirted a stream of blood, like a needle-pricked water balloon, into his spongy grey cerebrum, saturating an area the size of a tangerine.

There were no words. He couldn't speak them; he had tried. Had tried to call his wife Juanita when he fell, had tried to say hello to Ginger when she wandered out and kissed his cheek with her warm wet tongue. And if somebody had spoken to him, he wouldn't have understood. Garbled noise is what he would hear.

The morning newspaper, tossed over the roof of a dented, wobbly-wheeled Yugo, hit the driveway at the left side of Clete's head and tumbled to its resting spot on the urine-dampened cement at his hip....

He and Juanita had been dancing down at The Club 101, and Clete had drunk five, maybe six, beers. Around about one o'clock, an hour after he fell paralyzed to the driveway, he had to pee. It was necessary. There was so much urine that, after it soaked through his pants, it seeped out onto the driveway and trickled down to the gutter and rolled toward the ocean, though it only made it as far as the mailbox before its source went dry.

About the time the newspaper hit the driveway, Clete's Juanita woke up alone in the bedroom. She went to the bathroom to pee, then pulled on her bathrobe. She shuffled, groggy and puffy-eyed, up the hallway to get Clete. She thought he had fallen asleep on the sofa in front of

the television.

As Juanita called out, "Clete. Clete, where the hell are you?" Ginger woke and stood on his chest and stretched. One of her paws dug into his dead right side, the other into the living flesh on the left. Clete gasped and swallowed and tried to call out to Juanita again.

TELEPATHY

When they moved Clete out of intensive care (his vital signs were good; no reason to stay there), his friends came and gathered around his hospital bed. He gazed up silently at their scared, ashen faces wanting to tell them they all looked like shit, that they ought to go and leave him alone and go on out and get laid or drunk or something.

He was tired and small talk and chit-chat were beyond him.

The men squeezed his good hand and said. "Take 'er easy, man."

The women kissed his forehead and left salty teardrops soaking into his hospital gown.

He closed his eyes and breathed a deep sigh. When he opened them, his friends were gone. They were walking across the hospital parking lot, on their ways to take his telepathic suggestion.

His wife Juanita remained with him. When she lay down at his side on top of the covers, then he was able to get some sleep.

TANGERINE

The doctor said, "He may come back; his paralysis may be temporary." He had the results of two tests. One was a CAT scan: dozens of pictures of the inside of Clete's skull that revealed an area of brain damage on the left hemisphere. The other test was an angiogram — dye pumped into the cerebral vascular system — showing nothing, and that was good: no more aneurysms on the verge of going boom.

"I've seen guys come back from worse," said the doctor as he held up a picture of Clete's brain. "The damage is not that extensive." He pointed at the dark spot with his